

The Iron Age

700 BC–AD 43

During the Iron Age, people began using iron to produce tools and weapons. It was a cheaper, stronger and lighter metal than bronze, and it could be shaped into finer and sharper objects. Trading between Britain and mainland Europe increased. Many Celtic people settled in Britain, and the Britons followed their way of life by feasting and creating music and poetry. However, Iron Age Britain was also a violent place. People lived in tribes and fought rival tribes for land and goods. The Roman conquest in AD 43 marked the end of the Iron Age.

Tools

Furnaces were created that were hot enough to melt iron ore to make iron. Blacksmiths could hammer iron to make tools and weapons. The iron-tipped ploughshare made it possible to plough heavy clay soils. Wooden bowls, dishes and plates were made using the pole lathe. The rotary quern was an Iron Age invention that was used to grind grain into flour.

Settlements

Most people worked and lived on farms in roundhouses, but by the end of the Iron Age, some larger fortified towns appeared. During times of war, many people lived in hill forts. Hill forts were built on a hill with one or more lines of earthworks, ditches and defensive walls. Warriors defended the people inside from enemy attacks. People in Scotland during the Iron Age lived in brochs (circular stone towers) and wheelhouses (stone roundhouses).

Monuments and art

Different regions in Britain developed different styles of pottery. The Celts produced fine metalwork with swirling patterns. Tribe chiefs would show their power by wearing gold and bronze accessories. Priests, known as druids, led open-air religious ceremonies. To make the gods happy, they sacrificed animals and humans, or made offerings of precious items such as swords.

